

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 02935 041716Z

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ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9368

S E C R E T BEIRUT 2935

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FOR SECRETARY FROM BROWN

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR,PINS, PINT, LE

SUBJ: CONVERSATION WITH FRENCH AMBASSADOR

1. I HAD EXCHANGE YESTERDAY WITH FRENCH AMBASSADOR, HUBERT ARGOD, AN OLD FRIEND WHO LIVED NEXT TO ME IN DAKAR SOME YEARS AGO. ARGOD IS AN EXPERIENCED DIPLOMAT WHO, PARTLY BECAUSE HIS WELL-FORTIFIED EMBASSY COMPOUND IS LOCATED VERY CLOSE TO THE FRONT LINES IN BEIRUT, HAS DEVELOPED REGULAR CONTACTS WITH THE PALESTINIANS AND LEBANESE LEFT, AS WELL AS THE EXTENSIVE CONTACTS WITH THE CHRISTIAN SIDE WOULD BE EXPECTED.

2. ARGOT AGREED RESTORING SECURITY IS PRIMORDIAL REQUIREMENT HERE. SAYS THERE IS NO COMBINATION OF LOCAL FORCES IN VIEW WHICH CAN BE COUNTED ON FOR SUCH SECURITY. HE NOTED EXISTENCE OF MANY SPLINTER GROUPS, AND FACT THAT COMMON CRIMES OF VARIOUS SORTS ARE TAKING PLACE ALL THE TIME. EVEN IF MAIN PROTAGONISTS AGREED ON SELF-RESTRAINT, IT WOULD BE EASY FOR FIGHTING TO BREAK OUT AGAIN.

3. HE ALSO AGREED, HOWEVER, THAT THERE IS SOME CHANCE LEBANON MIGHT STUMBLE THROUGH TO SUCCESSFUL ELECTION OF A NEW PRESIDENT, AND ONCE THAT CARD PLAYED, IT WOULD BECOME ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT THAT THERE BE NO NEW BREAK DOWN IN SECURITY. THE ONLY WAY HE COULD SEE THAT BEING AVOIDED WOULD BE BY INTRODUCTION OF MILITARY FORCE IN SOME NUMBERS FROM SOMEWHERE.

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4. HE QUESTIONED ME CLOSELY ON THE SYRIAN INTERVENTION POSSI-

BILITY, ASKING AS HAVE SO MANY OTHERS IF THE ISRAELIS DO NOT HAVE SOME PRICE WE CAN PAY TO GET THEIR AGREEMENT TO SYRIAN MILITARY INTERVENTION, I TOLD HIM I SAW NO POSSIBILITY OF THIS AT LEAST IN THE SHORT RUN. WHILE I COULD NOT RULE OUT THE LONG RUN, DIFFICULTIES WERE MOST APPARENT.

5. ONLY ALTERNATIVE THAT OCCURRED TO HIM WAS SOME SORT OF UN AUTHORIZED POLICE FORCE MADE UP OF USUAL SCANDINAVIAN CONTINGENTS AS WELL AS ISLAMIC AND ARAB FORCES IN APPROPRIATE NUMBERS. HE NOTED THIS WAS LONGER TERM OPTION, NOT IMMEDIATELY AVAILABLE. HE THOUGHT OUR GOVTS WOULD AND SHOULD STAY IN TOUCH ON SUCH POSSIBILITY. I TRIED OUT ON HIM AND HE LIKED POSSIBILITY OF A NEW PRESIDENT PERHAPS REQUESTING INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE FROM UN AND ARAB COUNTRIES TO RECONSTRUCT LEBANON, SECURITY TRAINING AND ASSISTANCE COULD BE PART OF SUCH PACKAGE AND PROVIDE COVER FOR IT. I TOLD HIM THIS WAS PURELY PERSONAL IDEA WHICH I'D HEARD FROM SOME THOUGHTFUL LEBANESE.

6. ARGOD TOLD ME ABOUT A MEETING HE HAD HAD DAY BEFORE WITH 'ARAFAT. 'ARAFAT TOOK FULL CREDIT FOR HAVING FORCED THE CEASEFIRE ON JUMBLATT, BY WITHDRAWING BULK OF HIS FIGHTING FORCES OR AT LEAST ORDERING THEM TO STOP FIGHTING. ARGOD DESCRIBED 'ARAFAT AS "THE BIGGEST LIAR OF THEM ALL" (THE EXACT DESCRIPTION ALSO GIVEN ME BY CHAMOUN), BUT ARGOD ALSO MADE THE POINT THAT HE BELIEVED 'ARAFAT WHEN 'ARAFAT SAID HE NOW CONTROLLED THREE QUARTERS OF THE TERRITORY OF LEBANON.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: NATIONAL SECURITY, POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, GOVERNMENT REFORM, INTERVENTION, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, POLITICAL SITUATION, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION, CAT -C
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 04 APR 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: vogelfj
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976BEIRUT02935
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: P850108-2224
From: BEIRUT
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760499/aaaadhdz.tel
Line Count: 90
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NODS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: vogelfj
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 21 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <21 JUN 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <15 OCT 2004 by vogelfj>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CONVERSATION WITH FRENCH AMBASSADOR
TAGS: PFOR, PINS, PINT, LE, LE, FR, US, SY, (ARGOD, HUBERT)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006